DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

No. 1 1944

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A WAR TO BE AVERTED

Most films are produced to make dollars and pounds, but selling films is selling ideas, not groceries. When the film salesman has his profit safely in his pocket, the ideas begin to work on men's minds. From the conflict between profit and ideas spring most of the current controversies on the future of the film industry; controversies that have now become a matter of public concern.

There appears to be considerable danger that a situation of hostility might arise from the present uncertainties regarding the future of the British Film Industry in relation to the powerful combines which, from Hollywood and New York, are in a position to launch an attempt at world monopoly. It would be a thousand pities if such a conflict should arise, for it is something which ought to be avoidable in terms of international good sense.

But the situation is beginning to look serious. People are getting perturbed. It is being said that there is no reason why the British people should be brought up on American culture, simply because American finance dominates our film industry. It would be so fatally easy, say the pessimists, for the Government to consider the British film industry on a comparable level of importance with the manufacture of, say, luxury leather goods—a source of revenue from foreign markets to be used as a bargaining counter when allocation of post-war markets is on the Anglo-American agenda. The Government might think it smart business to sacrifice our claim for film markets in exchange for a wide distribution of Australian wool or British blankets.

To appreciate fully the dangers of such a policy we might well consider the history of the Catholic Church. Catholicism, like Hollywood, has always been looking for new markets for old ideas. And wherever Catholicism found a market it left behind, not only its product, but an obstinate deposit of residual ideas. Today a growing number of people are beginning to feel that Hollywood has done, is doing, and will do the same, and that not always consciously and deliberately, but always effectively, the American motion picture has spread and is spreading throughout the world an ideology which, whatever its suitability for American domestic consumption, is inappropriate to all peoples. It is being pointed out that the American film may have raised standards of cleanliness throughout the world, that it may have encouraged us to wash and clean our teeth, to revere the physical beauty of our women and to keep our grape-fruit in refrigerators; that it may have publicised a moral code at once salutary and sentimental, but that its encouragement of materialist and individualist philosophies is out-of-date in relation to developing European cultures.

To the foregoing we must hasten to add that we have not yet succeeded in making the British film industry a medium of expression for the British people and the British view, though it is nearer to it than at any time before.

The problem is complex. Solutions which have been proposed are contradictory and cut across normal political alignments. There is a need for objectivity and freedom from old prejudice. The Board of Trade must watch with jealous eyes the buying into our industry, both at the production and showing ends, by American interests. Two Acts of Parliament have already been needed to loosen the American hold on British film production. It is difficult for the British film industry not to think of this conflict in national terms. Yet is it not rather a financial fight between groups, the stronger of which is at present American? Following this line of thought, what is our answer to those supporters of Rank who argue that the building up of a strong centralised British film industry is more likely to achieve success against the American colossus than a number of small, independent British groups which in this industry inevitably speak with dissentient voices?

Should not our independent producers of second-rate comedy, hoping to hoist their dividends with their Union Jacks, examine their heads as well as their hearts; and reflect that patriotic righteousness still provides no justification for bad musicals?

Rank's supporters in their turn must consider whether centralised financial control by a single individual with strong sociological persuasions does not ultimately and inevitably mean centralised dictatorship of subjects and ideas.

Meantime the problem remains; and the highly divergent views of the industry and the high levels on which the financial conflict is moving, make it essentially a problem that cannot be solved without official Government help.

If the British people are, as we believe, entitled to a just proportion of the world's screen time, it is all the more necessary that the Government, no less than the trade, should negotiate on a level which takes into full account the value of the film as a medium of international understanding. It is not merely a matter of international trade, nor merely a matter of our own national culture. It is a matter of seeing to it that all nations which engage in film-making (and what nation should not?) are in a position to make their own contribution to world screens.

As it is, it looks as though we have made up our minds to engage on purely bilateral negotiations and manœuvres. Yet it is pretty clear in most other fields that the structure of a world society must from now on depend on multilateral conceptions. In our efforts to safeguard our own national culture in terms of film we should not forget the many other nations with equal claims. We might consider speaking for others as well as for ourselves, and so bring to our dealings with the United States film industry a conception which will overstep national boundaries and make a real contribution to the world planning which must follow this war.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA

By permission of Ivor Montagu to whom the letters were sent.

From Pudovkin

DEAR IVOR,

I was glad to receive news of you although, to my regret, this was merely in the form of a telegram. I don't know whether you've had the letter I sent you last winter. You already know that I've finished the film of *The Russians*. I hope you'll see it on the screen soon. You won't be surprised that the play has been changed a good deal. You're an old film man and don't need reminding that the scale peculiar to the film dictates compression of the story, in every scene as well as of the play as a whole, to a much more thorough degree than needs to be done in the theatre.

Simonov and I together took out a whole number of characters, distributing their plot functions among the not very many that remained. We did this, for example, with the Germans, working out a new sort of synthetic character for the General, whose part—I may say by the way—interested me particularly. Well, for the first time since Tolstoy's *The Living Corpse* I've had a go at trying out my acting talents. The unfortunate "corpse" and the responsibility for his posturings could, after all, be shifted on to Otsep, who directed it. For any possible ill-success of the General, I and I alone am answerable. Even Simonov can't be made blameworthy. In putting the General on the screen, I was partly anxious to pay the Germans a personal score on my own account.

During the first world war, I spent some time with them as a prisoner. I very well remember an elderly General who used to come to our war prisoners' camp in the capacity of an Inspector with the special job of making harsher the harsh conditions under which we uncomfortably lived. I very well remember how he used to pass down the ranks of ragamuffins among whom I stood and bawl out to his officers, accusing them of "soft-heartedness" and "liberalism".

A tall, oldish fellow, with broad, stooping shoulders, on which hung loosely his grey military greatcoat embellished with turned-back red lapels. From time to time he would turn his dead-pan face toward us and direct upon one or other of us a gaze completely devoid of expression. Then that gaze would crawl over the man he was looking at, with the slow deliberation of a dreadnought manœuvring.

I've remembered that fellow all my life long. I've remembered with a kind of horror that there can be human beings in existence with the mental make-up and horizon almost of some sort of mangy chained watchdog, whose visual world is bounded by a view of feet, either those of his master—which he must lick—or those of other people against which he must hurl himself, snarling and slavering. I was pretty much of a youngster, endowed with a natural respect for grey hairs, and the impression it made on me was truly abominable. And if I've succeeded, playing in my picture, in giving even an approximate rendering of this vile spiritual emptiness of a German "patriot", then I shall be most happy, and feel I've paid back a bit of my debt to the noble "Aryans".

The main thing we've tried to do in the film is exactly to portray its title: *The Russians*. They are a very varied people, the Russians in this story, with sharply distinguished ages and characters, with different sorts of education and differing experience of life. The twenty-year-old fresh and spontaneous Valya; the sixty-year-old sagacious, experienced and rigidly firm-of-principle Vasin; the forty-year-old Safonov whose will-power, hardened in battle, directs his every word and action; the life-loving Globa, fussing about comfort whatever happens; the hysterically weak-willed wife of Dr. Kharitonenko—all these at the given moment march on the one path, not one determined in accordance with their individual characters, but the one belonging to the people as a whole. To that same "soul of a nation" of which Tolstoy tells with such power in "War and Peace" and in whose final victory we all of us today invincibly believe.

My next job is tied up with exactly that all-deciding strength of the "soul of a nation". Simonov and I are working on a film of the great battle near Moscow. It's not, of course, going to be an affair of battle scenes and panoramas. Nor of duplicating what has already been done in newsreels and newspaper stories. No, the job is to perceive and portray those deep "root" causes that brought about the inevitable first defeat of the Germans, despite their then clear superiority not only in material but also in military morale, exalted by their uninterrupted victories.

I can't tell you any more about that film—it's now in the stage of being worked out. Simultaneously with this pretty large-scale job, I am, as I do always, working on the parallel preparation of another. I'm planning to make a picture about "Admiral Nakhimov". He was a naval hero of ours dating from the days of sail. I should like to ask your help and I'll tell you in what direction. The traditional uniforms of the English fleet in sail-boat days were pretty well international at the time. They were imitated in all countries, our own among them. If you could get hold of a reasonable quantity of pictorial material dealing with naval sailing fleets of about 1840–1860 for me, I should be most heartily grateful. Any daguerreotypes of the period you could get hold of would be especially valuable, because photography was so poorly developed in our part of the world in those days.

I can't let this opportunity go of telling you what I thought of the picture *In Which We Serve*. It's a splendid job, overwhelming in its complete and well-thought out frankness. One of my comrades called it profoundly national, and I fully agree with him. The picture is English through and through. You can see the face of the real England in it. The scene in which the Captain, taking leave, shakes the hands of a whole file of his compatriots, and each conducts himself as though he were like no one but himself, and yet at the same time all are like each other, will remain long in my memory.

Please give my warmest and most cordial greetings to the author and to all who worked on the film with him.

Yours,

V. I. Pudovkin

From Rowan Karmen

DEAR MONTAGU,

Returning from the front I found your cable which I answer immediately.

I have always been a strong opponent of uniting documentary and acted material. And long before I saw the Davies film I was interested in how far Curtiz had succeeded in integrally blending the newsreel and studio shot, in the means used to enable the actors to recreate political figures and to reconstitute political events.

I think Curtiz has succeeded in this. And the success he has achieved is not merely in making a good production in comparison to the ordinary run of film, but in establishing an interesting new genre of feature films, that one might call journalistics. I am sure that many new films, well appreciated by audiences, will come to be made in this genre.

The new material embodied in the film and forming an inseparable part of it creates, in my opinion, a stronger impression than acted versions of the same scenes would have done.

It is possible, by the way, that our appreciation of the film is a bit handicapped by the make-up of the actors who personify the political figures of our country. Soviet spectators can hardly restrain a smile when on the screen appear Kalinin, Vyshinsky, Litvinov, Molotov—all utterly unlike themselves as they are in real life. But it is obvious that the director did not set out to create exact resemblances, just as he is content to show Walter Huston, who appears on the screen immediately following the authentic Davis, also not at all like the original. Huston is a talented actor. From the first moment he appears he stands out as the film's main character, its author and commentator on major events which, though recent, have already entered the realm of history.

We see how the war of to-day which is costing mankind so much blood and suffering was unleashed. We see Berlin—that robber's den in the centre of Europe, wherein steel wings were forged upon the dove of peace. Before the spectator's eyes pass the frenzied bacchanalia of Hitler's military parades. Everything in that country—from the crazed Führer to those children he corrupted to become tin soldiers—everything is directed toward the aim of conquering the world. And in what striking contrast to those scenes in the film showing the gloom and pitiful stupidity reigning in Nazi Germany appear the scenes on the screen depicting the peaceful building up of the Soviet Union.

Thousands of people have seen this film in our country. Soviet filmgoers have unquestionably appreciated the noble aspiration of its author, which permeates it with an appeal for mutual understanding and mutual trust between the democratic States in the interests of speediest victory over the enemy and the building up of lasting peace after victory has been achieved.

For us film people the picture *Mission to Moscow* is of great interest as typing a new genre *Film Journalistics*. We welcome it as a work strengthening the friendly relations between great peoples, cementing the firm alliance of the democracies without which final victory over Hitlerism, the enemy of progressive mankind, is impossible of achievement.

Yours sincerely,

ROWAN KARMEN

Transmitted by S.C.R. (Kislova)

Educational Film

by G. Patrick Meredith

Visual Education Centre, University College, Exeter

THE future is being anxiously scanned by all who are concerned with educational films whether as producers, administrators or users. There are two major problems: who is to finance production? And who is to control it? It is not always true that he who pays the piper calls the tune. If it were true in educational film production the choice and quality of films would either be commercially dictated or state-dictated. The former is undesirable. The latter, whether you like it or not, is contrary to English educational policy, which has always avoided any centralisation of education which would give the government of the day direct control over the classroom. Europe to-day is an object-lesson of the opposite policy.

It is fairly obvious that we shall have mixed finance in educational film production. Extensive plans are now being laid down by a number of great industrial and commercial concerns for the production of sponsored films specifically educational in character. These will be freely distributed after the War. Then there are the various film production companies, large and small, who have to make a profit on their productions. Ultimately these films will be paid for out of public funds. There is also the possibility that a successor to the M.O.I. Films Division may take a hand, again financed out of public funds.

The teacher's share

We can look upon this situation as a grand opportunity for a terrific scrap or we can look upon it as a problem to be solved. The one guiding idea to take us through the maze is the realisation that ultimately all these films have to be shown to children, by teachers in class-rooms, in order to satisfy educational needs. This is sometimes overlooked. The teacher, then, should have a direct say in production policy. *If we can devise machinery for making educational needs articulate, and for giving the educational world the final say in production, we can avoid the perils of both commercial and political dictation.* (And socialists who *want* political dictation must admit that they want it only when they are in power.)

Now how can the teacher be enabled to play his part? Perhaps his biggest contribution to the educational film problem is his expert sense of relative difficulty on the one hand, and his sense of the relative importance of topics in the existing curriculum on the other. On both of these points film producers often go sadly astray, and this single fact is more than anything else responsible for the considerable measure of scepticism which still exists in the teaching profession. It is not the producers' fault. They cannot be experts in both the studio and the class-room. The fault lies in the lack of the machinery of collaboration. The producer *is* at fault if he imagines that there is any resemblance between the educational film situation and the feature film situation. You get your regular twenty million habitués going to see feature films with very little effective discrimination—there is no rival entertainment on a comparable scale. But if teachers are dissatisfied with the educational films provided, they just won't play ball. Panels for previewing films already produced, while very necessary, are no solution. The teacher must have an effective voice in production right from the start if the final product is to be as perfect educationally as it is photographically. All this has been said before, especially in Scotland, but we still lack the machinery to make the principle operative.

The director's job

We must beware of over-simplification. This problem is inherently complex. Give a topic to your film director and he at once starts "seeing" it pictorially. Being thoroughly familiar with the whole range of techniques at his disposal he easily selects those which best suit his purpose. Few teachers have that familiarity. They know what they want in terms of hard factual and intellectual content, but the intrinsic peculiarities of the film medium prevent them from fully realising either the difficulties or the opportunities. Yet it is *not* enough for the teachers to offer merely a list of topics on which they require films.

We have to respect the creative prerogative of the film director. He is first and foremost an artist. At the same time he has to recognise that he cannot have quite the free hand in educational films that he has in documentaries. In making an educational film he becomes a worker in the "education industry". This means that the synthesis achieved in the film must do more than satisfy his own aesthetic proclivities and the intellectual needs of the situation—his ordinary documentaries have to do that anyway. *The educational film must be capable of being used by the teachers without playing havoc with their normal handling of the topics.*

It is useful to distinguish four types of educational films. I shall call them the Essay-type, the Chapter-type, the Paragraph-type and the Sentence-type. The Essay-type is your background film. Here the director can and should have wide latitude. He has opportunities to rove over a much wider range of possibilities than the teacher and can introduce material which just would not occur to the latter. The classroom view is apt to become restricted. The background film can open a window on the world. It may even tell the teacher something about the wider relevance of the subjects he is teaching. The length, both of this type and of the Chapter-type should be determined not by the length of an Edwardian music-hall turn but by the needs of the theme and the children's capacity for attention.

The Chapter-type is your straight teaching film and is the hard core of our problem. The Paragraph-type is a silent segment lasting perhaps two or three minutes or even less and dealing with a single unit process, movement, growth, change, etc. The Sentence-type is similar to the Paragraph but the unit is smaller. It is exemplified in the Loop-film. These last two types are needed in large number to supply the dynamic material required in so many lessons. They offer no serious problem other than in the technique of handling them, which still needs exploration. As far as production is concerned, lists of topics on which these short films are required should be furnished by the teachers and the films should be bought outright by the schools.

The real problem is the Chapter-type. If this type is to survive, some quite new machinery will have to be devised to bring about the necessary integration of the educational and cinematic aspects. It is quite useless for producers to force pre-fabricated bundles of knowledge on the teachers. As a profession they won't take it. And they have a case. I do not claim that the teachers' case, as sometimes expounded, is altogether water-tight. They tend to adopt a proprietorial attitude to the curriculum. Their curriculum tends to get out-of-date through inertia. They sometimes forget that society on the one hand, and science, scholarship and art on the other have rights in the curriculum. A static curriculum is no preparation for a dynamic world. The tendency to regard the teacher as the one expert who knows what's what, while understandable, cannot go unchallenged. But if the challenge comes from commercial interests it is obviously unacceptable. Some means must be found (and we are busy at Exeter finding it) for encouraging progressive-minded teachers up and down the country to get to intellectual grips with the film as an educational medium.

The film is a self-contained medium in its own right, owing little directly to any other media —indeed suffering from the jealousy of these— and having its origin in the technical progress of photography. As a self-contained medium it has its own laws, its own inner structure, its own stylistic devices, its own "vocabulary" and "grammar" and,—be it noted—its own *logic*. So accustomed are we to taking our traditional verbal logic as the only possible logic (though the logicians themselves in recent times have produced an amazing crop of divergent logics even of the verbal variety) that the notion of visual logic as a thought-system, with characteristics having little or nothing in common with our verbal logics, comes as a shock. This is a

(*Continued overleaf*)

SIGHT and SOUND

A cultural Quarterly

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

appraising educational and entertainment values

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separate topic, to be developed elsewhere. For the moment suffice it to say that traditional logic, as formalised originally by Aristotle, simply codified certain thought processes deemed adequate for minds living in a very different social and physical world from the one we inhabit, but desperately inadequate to-day. To transform our thought processes and bring them into close correspondence with the actual processes around us, a medium is needed which can speak directly to millions—as do the press and radio. The only such medium is the film.

The film is a medium of communication, but not merely in the mechanical sense. Radio and the printing press are media of communication but they simply communicate *words*. The film can communicate not only words but images and visual ideas. These form a language in themselves. It follows that we are all becoming bilingual. However, so rooted are our ways of thought, our social behaviour, our civilisation, in verbal language, that we are not—most of us—mentally ready for what the film has to offer.

Hence the need for a deliberate attempt to bring verbal and visual expression into juxtaposition to bridge the gulf and pave the way for a visual-minded generation. Such a change-over would enable the linguistic strangle-hold of traditional stupidity, hatred and ignorance, to be eliminated. It is not so easy to be stupid in pictures. Further we can say things visually which can't be said at all verbally.

If the film can say things which verbal language cannot express, or can express only with endless circumlocution, this has an important bearing on the relation between film producer and teacher. We cannot simply suppose that educational film development would proceed smoothly, if only suitable machinery could be devised for bringing the wishes of the teacher to the notice of the film-producers. You have to conceive before you can wish and you conceive mostly in the terms on which your mental training was based. The vast majority of teachers have been trained in the verbal tradition. Their curricula, syllabuses and lessons are accordingly conceived in verbal terms, and they find it difficult to conceive education in any other terms. Consequently, if the production of educational films were made to depend on the wishes of the teachers the result would be doubly unfortunate. On the one hand, many of their wishes, being conceived in verbal terms would be incapable of filmic expression or would raise serious difficulties. On the other hand, a whole realm of visual ideas foreign to the outlook of all teachers trained in the verbal tradition but part of the film-maker's mental stock-in-trade, would go to waste because there would be no demand for it. You cannot demand something of whose existence you are unaware.

It is important to emphasise that in the film there has rapidly grown up, not only a new and immensely powerful *language*, but also a new world of *ideas*. The teacher may reply to this: "This is all very interesting but it does not concern me. I have a job to do, a certain amount of educational ground to cover and all I want is a few films to help me cover it. Your 'visual ideas' deal with things outside my curriculum". This brings us to the point at issue, the issue of the old wine and new bottles. *You cannot introduce a new and powerful educational technique and go on indefinitely teaching the same old curriculum.* The whole history of the Industrial Revolution teaches the same lesson. The railway and aeroplane do not merely do what the stage-coach once did. People travel for new purposes. The power-loom does not only make the old fabrics. The radio does not simply give the orator a wider public, it has given him a new world to talk about. Must education forever sit Canute-like, denying—or defying—the oncoming tide?

In short the film provides not only new ways of saying things but new things to say. If this argument is granted, a better, more reciprocal and more dynamical relation between film-producer and teacher becomes possible. Put schematically, it amounts to this:

Teacher: "I want you to make a film saying 'a b c' for me."

Producer: "I can't easily say 'a' but I can say 'b c' also 'd' which you hadn't thought of, but which is a logical extension of 'b c'. So if you will pave the way by saying 'a' in your own way, I will say 'b c d' in a film.

Teacher (later): "Your film was useful. It said 'b c' in about 8 minutes. Normally 'b c' takes over an hour of verbal instruction. Now 'd', which you stuck in, was a new one on me (though curiously enough it didn't seem new to some of the children) but I liked it. It gave me ideas. If 'd' helps in teaching 'b c', wouldn't something like it be possible in teaching 'e f' which is always a rather difficult topic?"

Producer: "Let me think a little. I once made a film on 'p q r' which is in some way similar to your 'e f' though not much like 'b c'. What you need here is not something like 'd' but something like 'i' to round off 'ef' in the way 'r' rounds off 'p q'. Yes, I think I can manage that."

Result: The film "e f g" which neither producer nor teacher would have thought of alone, and which could only result from their previous collaborative experience in film-production

This is, of course, a much over-simplified picture of the relationship between producer and teacher and we have left out a third party, the subject expert (scientist, historian, etc.), but enough has been said to indicate the process.

If the educational film is to develop systematically and in accordance with the needs of our present situation, the technique for pooling the brains and experience of the film-expert, the educational expert and the subject-expert must be elaborated and made more explicit. Moreover it is not merely a question of three individuals working together but three groups, or rather three professions. It is not merely a matter of expressing day-to-day needs or individual brain-waves *but of giving full-time technical expression to long-term educational policies and of bringing a vast realm of visual ideas into juxtaposition with the current educational ideology, and of being prepared for a substantial transformation.*

It is not enough merely to state a problem. Steps towards the solution must be indicated. The setting up of the Visual Education Centre at Exeter may contribute. It would be academic in the worst sense of the word to train teachers in the use of films without taking any interest in the probable future supply. As Lecturer in Visual Education I have been much occupied with this problem. Plans are now being put in hand for a series of conferences beginning with a conference next Easter at Exeter, mainly for teachers. Proposals will be made for permanent machinery for representing the various interests involved and for co-ordinating supply and demand. It should not be beyond the wit of man to devise means for harnessing our technological powers and opportunities to our social and educational needs.

★ For your information

IN every progressive enterprise there must be leaders and those who follow behind. As artistic and technical progress in kinematography quickens to the tempo and stimulus of war, "KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY" is always to be found "up-with-the-leaders", its well-informed pages radiating perception and far-sighted thinking. Kinematography's leaders themselves know this for truth and turn to "K.W." week by week for information and enlightenment.

Kinematograph WEEKLY

★ 93 LONG ACRE LONDON W.C.2

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Two Good Fairies. *Production:* Norman Films. *Direction:* Germaine Burger. *Camera:* Jack Rose. *Script:* C. E. M. Joad. 17 mins.

THE Scottish C.W.S. is entitled to congratulatory remarks for sponsoring a film about the Beveridge plan, but they must forgive us if we fail to get enthusiastic about the results.

The story of the film concerns a soldier who dreams of what life will be like for him after the war with the Beveridge scheme in full operation. He is trained for a new job, gets married and rears a family, and at every stage of his life his friend "Bill" Beveridge pops up with a bountiful supply of money to help things along—marriage grants, maternity allowances, children's allowances, funeral grants and so on. Now this is all very well but it does no good service to Beveridge. To picture a post-war period in which a benevolent Government showers gifts on the people is precisely the approach any intelligent Tory would make for the purpose of discrediting Beveridge, and it is a matter of regret that the Scottish C.W.S. and Norman Films did not give far more thought to the propaganda approach to such an important subject. Neither is the film helped by its amateurish acting and bad casting or by an altogether too long and often unintelligible postscript in which the benefits of co-operative insurance are explained by someone sitting at a desk. (The Co-op is the second good fairy.)

The fight of the people to get the full measure of the Beveridge Plan embodied in legislation is likely to be a hard and bitter one; but there is no suggestion of this in the film. If the documentary film is to play its full and proper part in aiding and inspiring the people in their fight for social security, this "Manna from Heaven" approach evinced in the *Two Good Fairies* will have to be supplanted by some very clear objective thinking. The Co-operative Movement has in the past sponsored several really good documentary films and it is good that such an important and progressive movement should play a leading part in this field of propaganda for the post-war world. It is, therefore, with the friendliest of intentions that we suggest in future they devote more thought to the treatment of subjects.

Power for the Highlands. *Production:* Rotha Productions. *Direction:* Jack Chambers. *Photography:* W. Suschitsky. *Script:* Roger McDougall. M.O.I. 15 mins.

THE difficulty in scripting a post-war subject is that you are even more influenced towards vagueness and caution than when handling a current topic. This film shows that such screen statements can be both broadly definite and controversial. Does this prelude a period of less timidity, or is it just that the Scots are considered mentally more tough than the English?

A strong case is made for a post-war "T.V.A. Plan" by which the waters of the Highlands would be harnessed to provide Hydro-Electric Power for the development of industries, and thereby employment for the men now fighting. The argument is presented partly by commentary but most effectively by dialogue between a reactionary old estate keeper and Servicemen on leave, a prospecting engineer and two Yanks lost in a jeep. The keeper is too strong in screen personality for the others, which may be why his conversion to their way of thinking seems facile. Here is no character actor convincing you he's a good character actor, but a man who belongs to the hills and moors all around. Whether or not you credit his conversion doesn't matter: his dignity is not upset and he fixes the argument in your mind. The dialogue is good, though it seldom sounds spontaneous. The camera gets around from a shocking opening at Alamein to many interesting Highland scenes, and flies impressively over Tennessee. Neat continuity keeps the film coherent in spite of over-emphatic music. This lively picture will encourage all Scots who don't agree with the keeper. His kind will argue and maybe reconsider.

Highland Doctor. *Production:* Paul Rotha Productions. *Direction:* Kay Mander. *Photography:* E. Catford. M.O.I. Non-T. 21 mins.

MY father is at present Non-Theatrical. He can't get the petrol to drive into the nearest theatrical town. Though he always goes to the M.O.I. shows in the village, his praise is reserved: not solely on account of the defects of 16 mm. prints. He'd say about this film: it's all right if you like Highland scenery.

The director, remembering the trouble taken to establish two characters—a doctor and a specialist—might well protest. Father, thinking that perhaps he dozed a bit and not liking to admit so deadly a reflection on a visually lovely and well made film, might not maintain his point. But the truth is that screen characters which become disembodied voices tend to lose all character and become awkwardly conventional stooges. It may well be that lack of finance forced a treatment which entails mainly mute shooting. In that case, straightforward commentary would have allowed greater visual freedom and avoided that awkward flashback transition. The ghost voice treatment, though it probably dates back beyond the Preston Sturges narratage of ten years ago (*Power and Glory*) has never seemed good to me, except as a brief, pointed sequence transition.

The script of this film is lucid, the direction precise, lovely exterior photography conveying very well the geographical nature of the Highlands and islands where so much progress in medical services has been made during 30 years, but—to paraphrase—much remains to be done. All this is nice, despite the worried music, but it leaves you cold. The facts remain on the track. You take away only slight, pleasant impressions of distances and a plane on the shore.

Europe's Crossroads. March of Time. No. 6. 9th year.

MR. JEAN PAGES, who made that sensational *March of Time* about Franco Spain has since visited Portugal with cameraman Marcel Rebière, and while *Europe's Crossroads* has not the same quality of terrifying analysis as the Spanish film, it is still a first-rate job of reporting.

Portugal is a country under dictatorship, political and religious—the Roman Catholic Church seems to own and run the country completely. As in most priest-ridden countries, the standard of living, especially among the peasants, is deplorably low. Dictator Salazar talks a lot

(*Continued on page* 8)

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Problems in Production of U.S. Navy Training Films*

Orville Goldner

* *From "Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers"*

Slide-films and motion pictures for the Navy are being produced under the supervision of the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, who was directed by the Secretary of the Navy, in August, 1941, to ". . . fulfil the photographic requirements of education and training in the naval service". The Photographic Board, which made the original recommendation on which the Secretary acted, lumped the responsibility for the photographic requirements of education and training with other photographic responsibilities and assigned them all to the Bureau of Aeronautics because of its long-time experience in naval photography.

As a result of this directive, the Photographic Division of the Bureau of Aeronautics, through its Training Film Branch, serves the entire Navy in its film production programme. Requests for film productions originate from training officers in the various naval training centres maintained throughout the country, or from officers in the training divisions in Washington.

When production requests are approved by the cognisant authorities, the Training Film Branch assigns a two-man team to work with the technical advisor in outlining and producing a training film on the subject. One team member is the educational consultant, the other the project supervisor. Essentially, the project supervisor is the co-ordinator and administrator of the project for the Navy. Besides contributing the film "know how", he activates the project through his liaison relationships with the several persons jointly engaged in it—the technical advisor, the Navy or commercial producer, the educational consultant, the procurement and cataloguing departments of the Training Film Branch.

The educational consultant helps to ensure that a film, as planned, teaches. He not only defines a film's purpose but helps to plan it according to well established pedagogical principles. He finds ways to fit it into existing curricula and may assist in adapting existing curricula to the new instructional programme. In several instances it has been found that pictures have forced realignment of existing curricula.

Since the organisation of the Branch charged with responsibility for producing films for the Navy (July, 1941), the total number of projects completed is 1,692. Of these, 1,412 were slide-films and 280 were motion pictures. The total number of projects in production at this time is 1,296, of which 850 are slide-films and 446 are motion pictures. Requests for production of films on additional subjects of interest to Navy training are coming in at the rate of 200 a month —clear evidence of the Navy's interest in the medium.

Another line of evidence showing the Navy's dependence upon training films is found in the film distribution figures. In the last quarter, over 90,000 prints have been distributed. Nearly one thousand individual activities have been served. These include both ships and the nearly five hundred schools and naval training establishments ashore where men are trained before being assigned to the fleet or to which they are returned for further training after some fleet experience.

The training films the Navy makes and uses have been designed to be used in classrooms at the time in the course when they will help the instructor to standardise operations and make ideas clear to his students. They are not made to be shown as separate, uncorrelated features. And when planned for one specific group, as is most often the case, they are not expected to meet the complete needs of another group being taught things in a different way. For example, slide-films designed for use in the Aviation Service Schools for training enlisted men in maintenance and repair of aeroplanes have not been found particularly helpful for training civilian personnel in the aviation assembly and repair shops, even though both groups are working on the same model of aeroplane. The films the latter need are definitely job-analysis films on assembly and sub-assembly of parts, much too detailed to be of use in the Service Schools. The purposes served in each are different, and hence the training aids must of necessity be different too.‡

It is our task continuously to analyse the problems peculiar to and characteristic of every training situation. Training films must fit. Simply, they must assist in training or they are an expensive waste of time and strategic material.

We find it necessary to repeat frequently that we are not in the business of making films *per se;* we are in the business of making training aids. That is why in a training film programme like the Navy's there is no place for the movie making *prima donna*. Celluloid fever is easy to get, but the making of effective training materials requires analytical, straight-line thinking, planning, and execution.

When an official request reaches the Training Film Section, there are still a great many questions that have to be answered before a producer can be assigned to the task of producing the training film. A thorough job of research and preplanning must be done. Due to the problems inherent in a training programme during a war period, basic research and pre-planning take on various aspects. First, there is the research based upon standardised doctrine, good or bad, realistic or unrealistic, which has been used over a long period of time by a fairly well stabilised training activity. Second, there is the research on a training programme where there is no established doctrine—where the whole training programme is so new that a syllabus or simple outline has not been developed.

Frequently it becomes the job of the Training Film Branch to establish the doctrine along with the production of the training film. In many cases, a training activity without established doctrine permits the creation of a more effective training film than the activity that presumably has all its information frozen in outmoded handbooks and syllabi. It is far more stimulating for the project supervisor, the educational consultant, and the technical advisor to approach a problem that has not been thoroughly explored. A training film that evolves out of such a situation is almost certain to be more operational and less abstract than one that has been built out of a maze of words and formulae

If no technical advisor is indicated on a request when it arrives at the Training Film Branch, it is obvious that the Branch must insist upon the appointment of a technical advisor before the basic research on the training film project can begin. It is always hoped that the technical advisor will come to the Training Film Branch with two basic qualifications—first, that he will be a subject-matter specialist, thoroughly experienced in the technical aspects of the proposed training film; second, that he has sufficient authority to make decisions that will hold and be approved by his bureau or the activity which he represents. If the technical advisor happens to be a desk engineer with years of experience or a technical writer who has thought in terms of words and mathematics entirely when considering his subject, he almost invariably creates many difficulties for all those concerned in the production of the training film.

Let us consider tor a moment the first type of research—that based almost exclusively upon doctrine set forth in great detail in handbooks and manuals. If the subject happens to be mechanics or electricity or any one of a hundred other involved subjects on the complicated apparatus of this war, in all probability, the authors of the manuals and handbooks were engineers sitting at the desks of the manufacturer of the equipment involved. Frequently these have been considered all that is necessary for the guidance and training of competent personnel. Needless to say, these handbooks and manuals are generally one-sided—they tell the story about the equipment that the manufacturer wants to tell. And yet more than once, these engine encyclopedia, Diesel dictionaries, and radio rhetorics have been given to training film officers as scenarios. "Certainly," says the technical advisor, "what more do you want?" "Just make pictures to fit, and you'll have a beautiful training film." And, believe it or not, we've made a few along this line—abstract talking panoramas to delight the eyes and ears of our best engine Einsteins.

We have been speaking here of one kind of material that is presented as doctrine for the construction of training films. This is the over-complicated and unrealistic which makes picture planning difficult. Another kind of material presented as doctrine is the over-simplified—that kind that grew up in an unstudied training programme, in the hands of an alleged instructor who thought that generalisations were enough. This kind of material contains profound statements such as "Proceed to the engine, make adjustments preparatory to starting, turn up fuel oil to the proper level, turn throttle to recommended starting position, proceed as recommended in Section *C*, p. 32 of the Manufacturer's manual, serial number 836, *etc., etc.*"

We who are involved in the construction of training aids for the Navy know that neither of these kinds of material is sufficient as a basis or plan for an effective training film. Our job of basic research must go further. Consider for a moment the construction of training films on a

‡ The foregoing was written by Lt. Reginald Bell, U.S.N.R., Senior Educational Officer for the Training Film Branch. It is reproduced here substantially as it appeared in *Visual Review* for 1943. The remainder of the paper was written by Lt. Orville Goldner, U.S.N.R., Officer in Charge, Training Film Branch.

series of large tactical problems which change from day to day just as the war itself changes from day to day. The movement, the pattern of strategy, the war equipment that won a battle yesterday may not win the battle at some future date for which we are building, and yet, we have to make training films on these problems too. One such problem has kept us involved for over a year. In that time, tactics have changed, equipment has changed, and personnel has changed. Technical advisors who were considered authorities when we began may no longer be considered authorities, or they have been removed to fields of operation inaccessible to the Training Film Branch, for every day, more men must go to combat areas whether they are working on training films or not. It is safe to say that within the year, typewritten material a foot thick has been accumulated on this particular problem. Dozens of experts have been consulted and countless manœuvres have been watched for the purpose of accumulating authentic, operational data. There must be continuous checking and cross-checking—for an error, made real and in effect true by projection on the screen of the classroom, could conceivably lose a battle if enough people believed it and acted accordingly. Conversely, the truth projected and made real—simply and operationally—might *win* the battle. It is this admitted effectiveness that justifies the production of training films; in fact, demands it.

Such a job of research and analysis is not an easy task. It is difficult enough to get a consensus on problems where standard mechanisms are involved. It is overwhelmingly difficult to get a consensus when broad tactical problems and intricate new machines of war are involved. Often, much valuable time is lost in getting a decision on a simple point, and these delays are not easy to overcome or explain; for in the end, there is the project file in the Training Film Branch which indicates that a certain training film has been in production an inordinately long period of time. With a few projects like this, the total production programme is bound to look out of joint. But the research, pre-planning, checking, and cross-checking must be done.

The second research technique—that which is without benefit of doctrine to begin with—is largely observational. The project supervisor, educational consultant, and technical advisor travel to the training activity that is to furnish the problem and the pattern for the training film. A typical example would be the assembly of a pontoon bridge. Let us assume that this is a new activity for the Navy, that the pontoons are new, that the total job is a part of an entirely new operation which extends the function of an established Navy rating. On such a problem, the researchers scrutinise what is going on. This may take a couple of days or a couple of weeks or longer. It may mean a trip to the South Pacific or the Caribbean, to one location or many locations. But inevitably, it means a detailed analysis of work under many conditions. With the training officer in charge, project personnel attempt to determine what tools are best and what techniques are best for the job to be done, wherever and however it must be done. The training film must, of necessity, set high standards for this particular operation wherever it is shown. Perhaps the training officer had never thought of his job in terms of the best tools and best techniques; perhaps it had been done previously with whatever tools were at hand by whatever method seemed most appropriate at the moment. Obviously, this is not precise enough for the discerning eye of the camera. When a simple wrench in use is projected on the screen, it may appear at once to be either too large or too small, or badly handled. Unskilled and indecisive workmanship and inappropriate equipment become readily apparent when reviewed on the single plane of the classroom screen. A recent example of this happened in a series of films being undertaken by the Branch on the disassembly of a certain engine. The two machinist's mates assigned to appear in the films were thought to be thoroughly qualified for the job. Aboard ship in the engine room, they could undoubtedly get by as able mechanics. And yet, when the first sequences of the particular training films were projected, it became apparent immediately that these two men were inept with tools and frequently used methods that could not be considered as standards for the training film. The sequences were re-shot and the films continued with more experienced mechanics who knew the proper tools and techniques.

The writing of a script for an effective training film requires first of all the ability to penetrate the obvious and the loosely accepted truths in a given situation. It requires persistence and a prying curiosity. It requires incisiveness and straight-line thinking, and with it all, the ability to put it on paper in acceptable English with an economy of words. The writer of a training film script must, of necessity, have a vivid imagination. He must be picture-minded first and word-minded second. In analysing his subject matter, he must ask himself constantly, "What is the picture at this point that will tell the story in terms of the objective?" And, having determined the picture, he must then ask, "What is the simplest meaningful statement that I can make that will extend the effectiveness of the picture and add to its retention potentiality?" The writer with genuine ability for training film production understands that he is working with a medium in which the primary value is visual and the secondary value is auditory. He knows that he is not writing lectures with pictures "to fit"; he is organising pertinent pictures of subject matter in movement, using the fewest possible words to describe, to emphasise, to extend.

Does the Training Film Branch get what it wants in the way of scripts for its films? Frequently it does, but time after time it does not. There is much revising, much compromising, and occasionally the accepting of the obviously bad in the name of urgency. Generally, no one can be blamed for the inadequacies. Perhaps, in spite of all research, sufficient data were not available to give continuity of the picture plan. Perhaps certain pictures were known to be unobtainable and without them the plan would have blind spots. Then again, perhaps, there had been insufficient experience with a given piece of equipment to furnish the facts about a certain operation.

However, there are times when script shortcomings stand out as direct evidence of the writer's refusal to accept the training film as a special instrument with a special purpose. When writers insist upon using pictorial *clichés* at the beginnings and ends of all training films, it becomes obvious that they do not know how to begin and how to end the film in terms of the objective originally set forth. It points to a limited concept of the job to be done and a definite lack of ability to work in the film medium. Words cannot describe the fatigue that comes from going to the projection room and seeing film after film begin and end with the opticals made up of the same twenty-five best shock shots of ships ploughing through the waves, big guns shooting at nothing, and planes peeling off, accompanied by ominous words in sepulchral tones on the scope of the war and the size of the job and the beauties of democracy and the beating we are going to give Hirohito, *etc.*, *etc.* And we must not forget, indeed, cannot forget, the overloud, strident music that fits the film the way ice cream goes with dill pickles.

The writer may not wish to take credit for all this, but he sets the pattern—good or bad—and the director, the cameraman, the editor, cutter, and narrator all follow the line.

Photography itself is probably the least of our problems, Most cameramen are able to get some kind of image on the film. Inasmuch as a large part of the shooting of training fims must go on in spite of weather conditions and countless other limitations, it is generally necessary to accept photography that is adequate, rather than good. To insist upon photography that is the best possible under ideal conditions in a given situation would often delay projects beyond reasonable limits.

Producers who work on training films for the Navy are always conscious of the demands for close-ups, for better definition, and maximum depth of field. These are essential in operational training films, Of great importance also are the orientation and re-orientation shots for which the Training Film Branch asks over and over again. A training film that skips around over an engine or a ship or anything else with close-ups and medium close-ups is certain to lose and confuse the trainee. He must be orientated to the problem in the beginning, and must be re-orientated at intervals throughout the film. This orientation must be operational; that is, it must be from a position in which the trainee would find himself if he were working with the real thing in a tactile relationship. Frequently, effective orientation shots are not possible in live photography, and it becomes necessary to resort to diagrams or other pictorial devices. Any device is legitimate if it achieves the purpose for which it is intended. Here again, like all the other complicated aspects of training film production, the photography is right when it gets to the screen the cogent picture information that the training situation demands.

It is not necessary to have beautiful clouds in all exterior shots and to have every Diesel mechanic backlighted in close-ups to make him glamorous, but realistic aesthetics have a place in training films. The cameraman who understands his medium, who uses his camera creatively and not like a garden hose, can combine on the screen the document of an activity in a composition of values from white to black that adds immeasurably to the value of the film and the pleasure of the audience.

Considerable time could be spent on other subjects as they relate to the production of training films. These include music, colour, animation, sound effects, narrators—their voice quality and delivery—and the subtle but emphatic values of the great range of screen devices. There are others, but they are beyond the scope of this paper.

We can look at the work being accomplished for the armed services by all the facilities of the motion picture industry with considerable satisfaction. But, in terms of the job to be done, we must look to the future with an expanding concept of the function of the motion picture and a more profound understanding of its value as a training instrument.

A REMARKABLE NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM

"WORDS AND ACTION" is the title of a new documentary film now available for distribution. It is an unusual film, even among documentaries. . . . a film which may be received with mixed feelings by some filmgoers, but will rarely be received in silence!

"Words and Actions" is a film about democracy. It shows democracy without a capital letter—the democracy that is no abstract catch-phrase to be thundered from political platform, pulpit and press . . . but the democracy that is PEOPLE—people working out their own salvation by the "democratic method".

Looking back over the past hundred years the public may well marvel at the social progress achieved by this same social "dynamic" . . . no more children for coal pits or chimneys, rapid advances in education, acceptance of trade unionism (once a penal offence), and many other "revolutionary and indecent" ideas. The high test of total war has spot-lighted the democratic method as it now solves new problems, and we have tried to add our tribute to the quota.

"WORDS AND ACTIONS" has been sponsored by the British Commercial Gas Association. It is now available for distribution to applicants. Details and booking form, for this and other documentary films, available free to approved borrowers, will be sent gladly on application to the Secretary, British Commercial Gas Association, 1 Grosvenor Place, London, S.W.1.

New Documentary Films

(*Continued from page 5*)

about the dignity of labour, but whether by accident or design, the people in the film all look supremely unhappy. As the commentary says, Portugal is one country where food is still abundant, but as most of it is sold to the belligerent nations, prices have been boosted beyond the means of the average citizen and wages are frozen by Government decree.

The wealthy still manage to have a very good time in Lisbon and the shots of the capital with its hordes of refugees, spies, journalists, diplomatic representatives and what-have-you are full of interest.

There is a wealth of really good material in the film, and although it steers clear of too positive a line, it is not difficult to draw your own conclusions, and for most people these conclusions will not be very flattering towards Salazar and the people who back him.

Cameramen at War. *Production:* Realist Film Unit. *Compiled by* Len Lye. *Commentary:* Raymond Glendenning. *Music:* Ernst Meyer. M.O.I. 14 minutes.

Subject: The men through whose eyes the plush-seated audience sees the blood and the sweat of the battlefields. As one watches the bombs drop on the target, the aircraft carrier shudder as it gets a hit, the wounded men struggling through the Pacific Island mud, it is easy to forget that there was a cameraman there making the pictures. However exciting or frightening the moment, the lens still had to be focused, the exposure set and the camera held steady. *Cameramen at War* is both a tribute to the men of the newsreels and the Service camera departments, as well as a record of their skill and initiative.

Propaganda value: The spectacular shots collected together here certainly make the film good entertainment, and the emphasis on the importance of the camera in both the last war and this gives the film an added weight.

Clyde Built. *Production:* Spectator Films. *Director:* Robin Carruthers. *Camera:* A. H. Luff. M.O.I. 23 mins. Non-T.

Subject: A brief account of Clyde-side today. The nature of its modern methods of shipbuilding and their relationship with tradition.

Treatment: A magazine type of film with loose continuity between dialogue and commentary episodes. The film ranges widely and for the most part superficially, yet occasionally plunges into technical detail beyond its compass.

Propaganda Value: Dubious. In its attempts to say everything, this film, in the reviewer's opinion, gets very close to saying nothing at all. It leaps madly from an apprentices' lecture to a works' committee meeting to an alibi about why American methods are inappropriate on the Clyde, to the inevitable workers watching launching and so on and on, one thing leading to another and frequently back again to something we thought we had already disposed of. The film is shapeless, prosy, yet well-meaning to the point of becoming in place a burlesque of old-style documentary. Moreover it comes to a natural, and not ungraceful end at least three times before the final fade-out.

ASSIGNMENT:—INDIA *by Maurice Lancaster*

On the Indian trip which he describes, Maurice Lancaster, British representative of **"March of Time"**, *was accompanied by cameraman Bob Navarro.*

We met in Simla on Sunday, July 13th, 1941. The last time I had seen Bob was on the previous December 13th, in the black-out at Euston when he took the train north to begin his voyage to Equatorial Africa; since then he had crossed the Equator six times by foot, by car and by air, had travelled many thousands of miles in Darkest Africa with the Fighting (then Free) French, eventually landed up in Cairo and flown down to India to join me. I had come the other way round—first going to Halifax by convoy, then down to New York, and flying from there to Singapore via Honolulu and Australia. "What is the assignment?" Bob asked me, "India," I replied. "Do you know anything about it?" "No", he said, shaking his head.

I had already been two weeks in India, arriving in Bombay just as the monsoon broke. This had not encouraged me greatly, as our Producer, Louis de Rochemont had said, "There's not much you can do about the monsoon, it just comes out grey on the film, sheer waste, better try and plan your itinerary so that you can avoid it." So, after talking solidly about India, its problems and our problems with ten different people daily, all of whom told me a different story, none of whom would eat the same food and worse, few of whom would take a drink, I set off through the washed-out countryside in the Punjab Mail, armed with a copy of *The Rains Came*, to find out what the great minds of the Government of India had to suggest in the rarefied air of Simla.

Bob and I soon decided that we had better go and see things for ourselves before we began actually to shoot. So, we left Simla and made a short tour to Delhi, Allahabad, where we stayed with Mrs. Pandit Nehru's sister, and then, after a hideous 24-hour journey, to Wardha, where we had an appointment to see Mr. Gandhi. Gandhi was at the time one of the few Congress Leaders who was not in gaol.

Appointment with Gandhi

We were exhausted after our train journey, hot and dirty, also needed a square meal. Young men in the white Gandhi cap met us at the station and we piled into the ancient green Ford, the only twentieth century vehicle in Wardha, and were driven to the guest house. The guest house is used for visiting Congressmen, but was at this time empty. The first thing they asked was, "Have you got an appointment?" One of the first things I had done after my arrival in Bombay was to send by special delivery my letter of introduction to Mr. Gandhi, and had received, a few days later, a postcard (whenever possible he uses this means of communication so that the inland revenue will not benefit by the extra cost of a letter in an envelope), saying that he would be pleased to see us any day except Monday, that being his day of silence. There was no problem and after they had telephoned to his village at Sevagram, we were told to present ourselves at 4 p.m.

We were then shown our rooms and had a wash, after which a meal was served on a sort of patio. There were various places set, that is to say some grass mats were placed on the stone floor, and then there were two absurd little tables and chairs, obviously for our use. We protested against these and they were removed, and we squatted on our haunches on the floor with the rest of the company, and set to with our fingers to appease our very hearty appetites on a meal of vegetables and gye with chappattis, which were served on a large green leaf for a plate. Soon the legs ached very painfully from the squatting, but we held our positions until the meal was over.

No Electricity

Later in the day, arrayed in our cleanest white shorts and shirts, we got into the old green Ford and motored over the dusty track for a few miles until we saw ahead a collection of mud houses—very uninspiring to look at. This was it. Our thoughts immediately turned to pictures, and we began to ask such questions as where the electric light was in all the houses and model school. Electric light, said they, Gandhi leads the same simple life as all the poor peasants of India. We have no such thing at Sevagram, nor do we have any plumbing. With these problems uppermost in our minds, we were ushered into the house, or rather the room which was the house. Seated on the floor and spinning all the time while he talked, was the old man, surrounded by people who were listening to him and who occasionally asked him a question—their shoes were all outside. In a very still voice he asked us to wait a few moments, and we listened to him; then he turned to us and in the same still voice asked what he could do for us. We explained the purpose of our mission, sought his advice and suggestions. He listened most politely, and turned us down flat. That is to say, he said: "You can have everything in Sevagram but me". We protested that without him Sevagram was nothing, but without avail, and having accepted his invitation to stick around and make ourselves thoroughly at home, told him that we would return at some future date.

The next day we went to Bombay which we had decided on as a base. Here we collected an Eyemo from New York, and some tropically packed raw stock and started to work. We soon found that, charming as the Indian people are, they are not the easiest people to make a film about. Set up a camera in the street, you are immediately surrounded by a milling throng of thousands and soon the police have to come and break it up, and if you have not the right passes, will whisk you off to gaol until you explain yourself. Also, few of the policemen have any English, so that is no use explaining to them: far better to go quietly and hope that you will find a sympathetic white inspector at the station. Passes in English are of little use, as few policemen read English. Our many Indian friends were most interested in our work and helped us to line up some of the sequences. However, invariably all the actors stood in a line and gaped at the camera, although it was explained to them what action was required, and that most important, they must act as if we were not there. Our well-meaning friends would shrug their shoulders and say, "It is of no use, Indian people will always look at the camera, otherwise they are not sure that you are taking their pictures."

Bob, however, would take his camera out alone or with me and spend hours just stalking the natural bazaar shots that we got in Delhi and Calcutta and Bombay. This involved the usual patience of Job. We would have to wait around sometimes as much as an hour intent on one particular shot which we might want, and at the same time, performing the difficult task of not being at all interested. Then when the action involved happened, it was a question of having enough anticipation to stop down, focus, of having the right lens in the camera to swing round and get the fleeting ten second shot that was to prove so useful in the final editing of the film.

Indian feature pictures are I suppose, the longest in the world, anything over thirteen thousand feet. They have many studios, some well equipped, but are a little happy-go-lucky about the technical details—or, they are over cautious. There is one true story of a lab. where some sound film was being developed; outside was a notice in nine languages—"Silence—sound film being developed". Bob was in constant terror whenever a coolie picked up his camera. Invariably he balanced it on his head; then would ensue a violent scene in which the coolie would have the camera pulled off his head, and have it more or less forcibly hung round his neck by the straps.

Nineteen Thousand Miles

Our assignment took us in all eight months, during which we travelled 15,000 miles by train, and 4,000 miles by car. 26,000 feet of raw stock were exposed mainly through the Eyemo, though a Newman was also used as a reserve camera. Apart from occasionally developing a few hundred feet in Bombay, all the material was shipped by sea to New York, a voyage of at least five weeks, and we had no complaints that any of it did not arrive in first-class condition.

The tropically packed film we received from New York was immediately stored at Kodak's, who had a very good installation for keeping raw stock, and all kinds of photographic materials. In normal times, India is Kodak's third largest market for raw stock, due to the length of film involved in shooting an Indian feature film, and they have ample storage space, properly controlled for humidity and temperature so that the stock does not deteriorate. When we were on the road, Bob took the precaution of shipping every thousand feet back to Kodak as it was shot to be stored by them until such time as there was sufficient to ship. Likewise, they were shipping us raw stock in small batches wherever we were in India. We found Mr. Quirbet, the technical head, who was one of the vintage cameramen of England and France, a great help and friend to us.

After endless talks we did at last get Gandhi to allow us to bring the camera near enough to him to make some shots, but the climax of our experiences with him was at the Congress party meeting, held after the congressmen had come out of gaol, and soon after Japan had come into the war. A special "Pandal" was built at Wardha and people came to the meeting from all over India, Bob and I were the only Europeans present. The Pandal was a large hall built of cocoanut matting, and completely porous. If the

(*Continued on Page* 10)

FILM OF THE MONTH

Lone White Sail. *Production:* Moscow Children's Film Studio. *Direction:* Vladimir Legoshin.

WHAT makes a good children's film or for the matter of that, a good children's story? Adults in general tend to plump for whimsy and sentimentality, probably because they like that sort of thing themselves and it helps to satisfy the unresolved adolescence in their natures. And so we get parents eagerly buying, reading and then shoving down their children's throats reams of *Winnie the Pooh* and *The Wind in the Willows* or forcibly taking them to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* or *The Wizard of Oz*. The children of course conscientiously and considerately enjoy themselves, but really, as a matter of fact, they don't think much of it. The world to children is just as real as it is to us, but because of their freshness, their small size compared with adults and the fantastically slow ticking of their life-clock, everything seems ten times as vivid, ten times as real and ten times as important. And so their meat is something much more like, say, Hans Andersen (*Big Claus and Little Claus* was just about my favourite story), where everything is startlingly real, clear and matter of fact, but many times life size. Which is why *Lone White Sail* is not only a first class film anyway, but a first class film for children, even better than *Emil and the Detectives*.

The Story

Lone White Sail is a story of two 12-year-old boys' adventures after the 1905 revolution. They live on the shores of the Black Sea, so naturally they get mixed up with a sailor from the Potemkin re-entering the country from Rumania. Then after the proclamation of the so-called Liberal Constitution, they help the sailor and his friends in their unsuccessful revolt, and later help the sailor in his escape from prison. But it is not so much the story, good as it is, that counts; it's the details. One of the boys is a working class lad, grandson of a supremely (and, it looks, deservedly) unsuccessful fisherman, the other comes from a middle class family and is a young student. These two make a finely contrasted partnership, Gavrik, the fisherlad, tough, self-reliant and adult already, the student inexperienced in the ways of the world but imaginative, well-meaning, terrifically anxious to help and, because of his social status, very useful. There must be very few people who don't find their childhood, or children their lives, mirrored in some way or other in the film. Best of all perhaps is the scene where Gavrik and his pal take the escaped sailor to see Gavrik's elder brother, who is a revolutionary stalwart. Whilst the two men talk secretly, Gavrik and the student go round and make friends with the rest of the family, and there's more of working-class life and revolution in that one scene than in all of Eisenstein and Pudovkin's films put together.

But the whole film is full of things like that, all as bright and real as day, but all just slightly more than lifesize, to fit the child's viewpoint; and incidentally shot from the children's eye-level. There's a truly magnificent fishwife who would be the terror of any fisherman, let alone of his son. There's granddad coming home boozed again, denouncing all fish salesmen (hear, hear) and having to be put to bed. There's the plain clothes cop, the villain, rather like Fritz Rasp in *Emil and the Detectives*, comic, squinting and awkward but somehow very dangerous, just like the farmer who when you're apple-scrumping always manages to catch you in spite of his clumsiness. There's the appalling baby brother of the young student, with his hoarded money-box and the quick horrifying glimpse of his birthday party. There's the beautifully economical period scene of the declaration of the Liberal Constitution with the business man kissing his coachman—"Hurrah! At last we're brothers." Smack, smack. "Drive on you swine!" There's the nice button-game that Gavrik always wins, and the student's father's unfortunate attempt at enforcing tidy habits on his son. There's the burly sailor, just a little more powerful, more silent and more heroic than life, whose final friendly handshake puts the student on top of the world, standing on the cliff top and declaiming to his admiring friends his favourite poetry-piece, *Lone White Sail*, as the boat disappears romantically into the distance, taking the sailor to fresh deeds of heroism. In fact all the film is in the heroic mould. "My brother's going to get the sailor out of gaol to-day." "How on earth will he do that?" "Why blow up the gaol of course." And blow up the gaol he does, the explosion, very nicely, coming over a title in the same way that Gavrik earlier had been content at the shooting gallery with just aiming (and then having a lemonade) instead of actually firing. But the whole film is like that, you get down to the real stuff, the lemonade, without wasting your time and money over the shooting gallery. Incidentally the photography is superb.

It certainly is a pleasure to see *Lone White Sail* again amid so many of the dreary slush and falseness of the wartime films; it looks as good as or even better than when we first saw it five or six years ago. It is a funny thing that since the Soviet Film Industry announced its new policy of Socialist Realism so few of their films have come up to scratch in that particular line. We've had all sorts of would-be realism that just turned out to be propaganda or daydream, like *Natasha*, and people with a strong style of their own, like Dovzhenko, have carried on in the same good old way, but of all their films seen in this country the only ones so far that could be said to be really successful examples of Socialist Realism are *The New Teacher* and *Lone White Sail*. Perhaps Realism comes a little awkwardly to the Russian temperament, or maybe now is a difficult time for it. Realism, I should say, arises from the confidence engendered by an optimistic philosophy, which presents you with a cut-and-dried solution to the problems of the universe. If you are confident enough that you have the solution to all problems, you must believe that to set down things just as they are is to prove your case; the difficulty being only to decide what they really are. For instance the great nineteenth century age of scientific materialism gave rise to the confident art of men like Zola, whose wonderful literary edifice was based on some doctor's piddling little theory of heredity by which he reckoned to explain the workings of the universe. The theory is dead but the books live on. But when the great tide of science and realism represented by men like Zola and Dickens, swept into Russia, the result was men like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, who may have thought they were being realist, but who were something very different. They simply hadn't got it in them to believe the scientific nonsense. And of course as time went on and people began to realise that scientific materialism was ushering in, not the millennium but armageddon, optimism gave way to defeatism and realism to escapism. Today as we struggle gradually towards a faith better founded and more practical than the brave new world of the nineteenth century dreamers, a new realism begins to show itself again. And what better place to show itself than Russia? But apart from Gerasimov and Legoshin, there has been not all that much sign of it yet. It would be interesting to know more about Vladimir Legoshin: this is, I think, the only film of his to be seen over here. Gerasimov obviously gets his confidence from being one of the younger generation, from growing up with and being part of the constructive epoch of the revolution. The director of *Lone White Sail* seems so much at home with all sorts of people and problems that it would be difficult to believe that he is a young man who has never been outside the U.S.S.R. But in any case the war—and this is one of its greatest horrors—must have set Russia back dreadfully, and it may be years before we can hope for films like *Lone White Sail* and *The New Teacher* again. In the end, though, the new Socialist Realism is bound to come and, it's up to us in England to be in there with it.

Assignment:—India

(*Continued from page 9*)

sun shone, one could make perfectly good pictures with natural light, but if it were overcast, artificial light would be needed. As nobody knew at what time Gandhi would speak, it was necessary for us to take all precautions, and Bob erected some photofloods above the speaker's dais, like spotlights on a stage.

The meeting opened on a gloomy note with some maidens chanting a dirge, and as soon as that was over, a messenger came to us and said that Gandhi insisted that the lights were put out. This we did with very poor grace, and sat waiting and praying that when his turn came to speak, there would be sufficient natural light for us to make our shots. At last he got up and Bob was stealthily making a few shots, when all of a sudden, an Indian still photographer jumped up and let off a flash bulb. The old man stopped speaking, attendants rushed in and threw the photographer out, also tried to do the same thing to us. Then ensued a long discourse on the evil ways of photographers, and the threat that if he heard so much as the noise of another camera, he would leave the meeting. Concluding with some bitterness that he had forgotten what he was talking about. You can imagine how popular we were with the thousands of followers who had come from all parts of India to hear the words of wisdom fall from the old man's lips.

With the entry of Japan and the United States in the war, any misgivings we might have had that India would never make front page news, vanished. And when Sir Stafford Cripps visited India, two months after our departure, our editors were able to release two consecutive *March of Time* issues, which incorporated scenes of every aspect we had covered during our eight months production.

FILM GRAMMAR
By Arthur Elton

AFTER the war the 16mm. film camera and the 16mm. film projector will be mass produced, and it is reasonable to suppose that the prices of these pieces of equipment will fall. This means that everyone who can afford a portable typewriter will also be able to afford a film camera. The film camera and the film projector will become as necessary as the typewriter, the fountain pen and the watch. The day is upon us when films can be printed cheaply, and can be made available to everyone who owns a projector. There will be lending libraries of films in every town, as there are now lending libraries of books. Everyone will have at his disposal a new means of self-expression.

If the film is to be used to its best purpose, everyone will have to learn the grammar and syntax of film making. At present, film making is largely confined to the professional. Though the film industry has produced its great and less great novels and poetry, it has not yet produced parish magazines, learned periodicals, local papers, minority pamphlets, and all the other commonplaces of literature and free speech. These are on the way.

Illiteracy?

Disadvantages as well as benefits arise from the easy acquisition of film cameras and projectors. For centuries, writing and reading were confined to the learned minorities in monasteries and abbeys. Very gradually indeed the common man learnt to read and write. Very gradually he fought for and won freedom of speech. In the case of the film, the common man is going to be presented suddenly with the instruments for self-expression by film. Within two years of the end of the war the market may be flooded with cameras. Is the common man going to take the pains to learn the grammar of film for clear expression in the same way as he learns the grammar of the written language? Or is the world for years to come to be filled with "illiterate" films? I do not mean that the common man must acquire the intricacies of film grammar and expression in the way in which a professional must do, but I mean that he must become as familiar with the elements of film craft, as writers of letters and pamphlets and parish magazines are familiar with the elements of writing. For I hope the film will be used by everyone who wants to record conditions in their home town or village, or wants to publish an account of an experiment, or a guide to local beauty spots, or an analysis of transport conditions, or an idea for town-planning, or any of the thousand and one things which contribute to the social and personal life of the individual and which are worth sharing with others.

The danger of "illiterate" film babel is a real one. For example, many scientists to-day are making their own films. Though most of them have mastered the principles of photography, few of them have mastered the grammar of film. Though sometimes literary expression by scientific workers is defective to the point of obscurantism, their films, I fear, are often worse still, stumbling, inconsequent, incomprehensible, and lacking in context and continuity. They are, not so much vehicles of expression, as lecture notes, and often bad lecture notes at that. (There are, of course, exceptions, such as the beautiful films on surface tension and Brownian Movement, made at the Royal Technical College in Glasgow.)

The film is an unmatched method for the mass diffusion of knowledge, but so long as its muddled make-up compels the presence of its maker, or a specially rehearsed lecturer, to explain it before it can be understood, nine-tenths of its value is lost. It has even less value than a duplicated memorandum. If the film is to fulfil the valuable purpose of a moving blackboard for teaching purposes, it still must be so shaped as to be useful for any lecturer who wishes to teach by it.

Unfortunately, illiterate films pass by unnoticed. The person who cannot read or write is instantly aware of his handicap. He usually cannot get more than a humble labouring job, and he cannot properly take part in democratic government. The person who makes an ungrammatical film does not notice his handicaps. It is society which suffers, and not the individual. Mass education in film grammar is a big task, and no one has yet attended to it. It will be necessary to add instruction in film making to the curriculum of our schools, and to open classes in film making for adults.

There are few, or no, simple text books on how to make a film, though there are thousands on how to take a photograph. This gap must be filled. For the day is soon coming when any organisation without a film camera will seem as backward as an organisation without a typewriter. The same will presently be true of the individual.

Martyn Wilson, M.M.

BEFORE the war, Martyn Wilson worked at Realist, and before that he worked at Scottish Films in Glasgow. He was a plump, easy going young man, with what is very rare in Scotsmen, the ability to take a joke against himself. One of the jokes happened after he had been in the Army for a couple of years. Walking across the courtyard on a dark winter's morning, with a pint mug of boiling hot shaving water, he slipped and as he jerked backwards the pint of boiling water was shot straight up into the air. As he leant forward to regain his balance the pint of water hit him smack in the back of the neck and he was in bandages for about a week afterwards. But he thought it was funny.

Later, Wilson was transferred to the Army Film Unit and became a Sergeant cameraman. His first real operation was the landing in North Africa. He landed with Commandos at Cap Ferrat, but his boat, unfortunately, hit a submerged sandbank and a human chain had to be formed to get the men ashore; Wilson, encumbered as he was with camera and stock, could not go along the chain and had to jump for it; he went to the bottom in ten feet of water. But somehow he managed to get ashore, with his camera which was by then in a fairly bad condition. Whilst looking around for something or someone on which to plant the camera, they were attacked by ambush. The man with Wilson was killed, and Wilson, grabbing his Bren gun, fought his way back to the boat.

Wilson was with Major Stewart all through the North African campaign, at Sedjenae, in the Battle at Banana Ridge and with the first American troops to enter Bizerta.

For gallant and distinguished service Sergeant Wilson has been awarded the Military Medal.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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stands for the use of film as a medium of propaganda and instruction in the interests of the people of Great Britain and the Empire and in the interests of common people all over the world.

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No. 15
THE WOLF AND THE BOW

RFU

A Hunter one day went out with Bow and Arrows. He managed to shoot and kill a Goat, which he threw on his shoulders and began to carry along. But spying a Boar, he threw down the Goat, and shot at the Boar and wounded him. The Boar then rushed at the Hunter, and after goring him to death, himself fell dead by the Man's side.

Scenting the blood, a Wolf came to the place where the Goat, the Boar, the Man, and his Bow all lay. The Wolf was glad, and said, "Now I shall have enough to eat for a long time. I will not eat everything at once, but little by little, that nothing may be lost. First I will eat the tougher things, and then I will dine on what is soft and sweet."

Then he began to gnaw the sinews of the Bow: but when he bit through the string, the Bow sprang back and struck him so violently, that the blow killed him.

Then the other Wolves, that had scented a feast from afar, came in their numbers, and ate up the Hunter, the Goat, the Boar, and their fellow-Wolf.

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Film Societies

The Leys Scientific Film Society started in Ca bridge in 1932 and has shown fortnightly f programmes for over ten years to about members. An important piece of work carr out by the committee in the first three years, w the compiling of a list of 300 scientific films h by scientific institutions, private individuals a industrial concerns. This work involved maki contact with many scientific industries, univ sity laboratories and research institutions Great Britain. The addresss of the film own and the conditions of borrowing were compil and circulated to a few kindred societies.

At many meetings it was possible to sh biological and natural history films produced Cambridge and to hear from the producers ho their work was carried out. High speed scienti films were always popular. On several occasio members of the society were able to visit resear laboratories and see research workers maki their films.

An open meeting was held each term for no members.

For the last three years, the School has be in Scotland but the membership of the socie has been maintained.

Farnborough Scientific Film Society gave thr shows last summer and when a winter seas was announced the full membership of 250 w subscribed. Sub-standard versions of scienti films and documentaries such as *Enough to Ea Housing Problems*, *Face of Britain* and *Childre at School* are shown. It is hoped to include i each programme a technical or research fil with appropriate commentary. Plans are als being made to give some shows of technic training films to local scientists and engineer The Secretary is E. W. Simon, 134 Ship Lan Farnborough, Hants.

The Leicester City Libraries continue their polic of film shows arranged to illustrate a particul subject. On the 2nd and 3rd of March the sub ject was "Home Front Again" and the film shown included *C.E.M.A.*, *Blood Transfusio* and *Worker and War Front No.* 4. On the 16 and 17th of March the subject is "Plan fo To-morrow" and there will be films about tow planning.

The Manchester and Salford Film Society wi show on March 26th *Blood Transfusion*, *Righ to Work*, *Right to Rest* and *Tarakanova*. There was a lecture on March 11th on "Cine-Cameras" and on April 1st a discussion o "Films and Progress".

Beginning with this issue "Documentary News Letter" will be published regularly every other month. Owing to mounting production costs we regret that we cannot make a corresponding adjustment in subscription rates which will remain at 6 - for one year (six issues) and 3 - for a half year (three issues). Single copies will be 1 - each. Subscriptions expiring before March 30th, 1944, and renewed before that date will be accepted on the old rates, which will mean that 6/ buys D.N.L. for two years and 3/- buys D.N.L. for one year. The same applies to unexpired subscriptions.

The Index for 1943 is contained in a separate sheet enclosed with this issue.